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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO NSC - DAMON WILSON

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SUBJECT: RAISING THE STAKES: GYURCSANY GOVERNMENT TO CALL
FOR VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

REF: BUDAPEST 1967 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: POL/C Eric V. Gaudiosi; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) Following the opposition's strong showing in the local elections October 1 (septel), Prime Minister Gyurcsany has announced his intention to seek the first vote of confidence under the current constitution in a special session of Parliament on October 6.

12. (U) Alluding to President Solyom's post-election comments re dictates of the constitution and role of the governing coalition in deciding the PM's fate, Gyurcsany referred to "those who believe it is necessary for the parliamentary majority to confirm its confidence in the government and its program." Although he congratulated "the largest opposition party" for their electoral victory, in a subsequent interview he underscored his refusal to bow to an opposition which does not always honor the limits of parliamentary democracy. He emphasized that "the country must be governed" and that the focus must remain on the future.

13. (U) In his public response to what it referred to as Gyurcsany's "false and cheap trick," FIDESZ leader Viktor Orban referred to the local elections as reflecting "the will of the people" and demanded that the PM step down by noon Thursday. If he does not, Orban continued, "100,000 people will come to Parliament" and people will stay in the streets until the Prime Minister resigns or the coalition acts to remove him.

14. (SBU) Both the MSZP and SZDSZ leadership have affirmed their support for Gyurscany. MSZP chairman Hiller calling on FIDESZ to "take politics off the streets and back into Parliament ... as we will not surrender to an ultimatum." SZDSZ chairman Kuncze, who has announced his intention to step down from the party leadership, emphasized the party's responsibility to pursue reforms at the cost of its own popularity. Orban, Kuncze concluded, must not be allowed to blackmail the nation.

15. (U) Note: Under the Hungarian constitution, a "constructive motion of no-confidence" must specify a candidate for Prime Minister. Such a motion may be put forward by a vote of 20% but requires a majority vote for passage. Although there has never been such a motion under the present constitution, PM Megyessey did consider a similar approach in 2004. Megyessey ultimately resigned in the absence of sufficient support by the coalition, and his departure led to Gyurscany's installation as Prime Minister.
End Note.

16. (C) Comment: Gyurcsany's decision to seek reaffirmation of his mandate reflects his confidence in the coalition - for the moment - but also his perceived need to prevent the opposition from building on the perceived momentum from

Sunday's election results. His present majority gives him the 50% required to stay in office but not the two-thirds necessary to approve institutional reforms, and the prospect of renewed demonstrations will focus the government on crisis management rather than reform. If Gyurcsany is sailing into uncharted waters, he is taking a calculated political risk in accordance with a process set forth in the constitution. In stark contrast, Orban appears to have no compass. Although he cannot stop the confidence vote, nor does it appear that he will let it stop his present campaign. Unlike President Solyom, who has carefully detailed the requirements of the constitution and emphasized the primacy of the rule of law, Orban is not letting the system constrain his present statements or his planned actions. There is no reason to believe Orban will accept the results of any confidence vote he finds inconvenient any more than he has recognized the limits of the local elections (septel). Indeed, he is already ignoring the very real risk of derailing the progress Hungary has made and the very serious consequences of damaging the the reforms Hungary must continue. End Comment.

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